

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

BYRON SMITH,

Plaintiff,

- against -

10XBETA, LLC

Defendant.

Docket No. 1:20-cv-2817

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

COMPLAINT

Plaintiff Byron Smith (“Smith” or “Plaintiff”) by and through his undersigned counsel, as and for his Complaint against Defendant 10XBeta, LLC (“10XBeta” or “Defendant”) hereby alleges as follows:

NATURE OF THE ACTION

1. This is an action for copyright infringement under Section 501 of the Copyright Act and for the removal and/or alteration of copyright management information under Section 1202(b) of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. This action arises out of Defendant’s unauthorized reproduction and public display of a copyrighted photograph of a pigeon light show in Brooklyn, owned and registered by Smith, a New York based professional photographer. Accordingly, Smith seeks monetary relief under the Copyright Act of the United States, as amended, 17 U.S.C. § 101 *et seq.*

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

2. This claim arises under the Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. § 101 *et seq.*, and this Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1338(a).

3. Upon information and belief, this Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant because Defendant resides and/or transacts business in New York and is registered with the New York Department of State Division of Corporations.

4. Venue is proper in this District pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b).

PARTIES

5. Smith is a professional photographer in the business of licensing his photographs to online and print media for a fee having a usual place of business at 50 McMullen Road, Westtown, New York 10998.

6. Upon information and belief, 10XBeta is a limited liability company duly organized and existing under the laws of the State of New York, with a place of business at 19 Morris Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11205. Upon information and belief, 10XBeta is registered with the New York Department of Corporations to do business in New York. At all times material hereto, 10XBeta has operated its Facebook page at the URL: www.Facebook.com/10xBeta (the “Website”).

STATEMENT OF FACTS

A. Background and Plaintiff’s Ownership of the Photograph

7. Smith photographed a pigeon light show in Brooklyn (the “Photograph”). A true and correct copy of the Photograph is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

8. Smith then licensed the Photograph to New York Times. The New York Times ran an article that featured the Photograph titled *2,000 Pigeons Will Put on a Light Show in Brooklyn*. See URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/29/arts/design/-duke-riley-pigeons-fly-by-night.html>. Smith’s name was featured in a gutter credit identifying him as the photographer of the Photograph. A screenshot of the article is attached hereto as Exhibit B.

9. Smith is the author of the Photograph and has at all times been the sole owner of all right, title and interest in and to the Photograph, including the copyright thereto.

10. The Photograph was registered with United States Copyright Office and was given Copyright Registration Number VA 2-107-623.

B. Defendant's Infringing Activities

11. 10XBeta ran the Photograph on the banner of the Website. See: https://www.facebook.com/10xbeta/?tn-str=k*F. A screenshot of the Photograph on the Website is attached hereto as Exhibit B.

12. 10XBeta did not license the Photograph from Plaintiff for its Website, nor did 10XBeta have Plaintiff's permission or consent to publish the Photograph on its Website.

FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF
(COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT AGAINST DEFENDANT)
(17 U.S.C. §§ 106, 501)

13. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each and every allegation contained in Paragraphs 1-12 above.

14. 10XBeta infringed Plaintiff's copyright in the Photograph by reproducing and publicly displaying the Photograph on the Website. 10XBeta is not, and has never been, licensed or otherwise authorized to reproduce, publically display, distribute and/or use the Photograph.

15. The acts of Defendant complained of herein constitute infringement of Plaintiff's copyright and exclusive rights under copyright in violation of Sections 106 and 501 of the Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. §§ 106 and 501.

16. Upon information and belief, the foregoing acts of infringement by 10XBeta have been willful, intentional, and purposeful, in disregard of and indifference to Plaintiff's rights.

17. As a direct and proximate cause of the infringement by the Defendant of Plaintiff's copyright and exclusive rights under copyright, Plaintiff is entitled to damages and Defendant's profits pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 504(b) for the infringement.

SECOND CLAIM FOR RELIEF
INTEGRITY OF COPYRIGHT MANAGEMENT INFORMATION AGAINST
DEFENDANT
(17 U.S.C. § 1202)

18. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each and every allegation contained in Paragraphs 1-17 above.

19. Upon information and belief, in its article on the Website, Defendant copied the Photograph from the Wall Street Journal which contained a gutter credit underneath the Photograph stating, "Byron Smith" and placed it on its Website without the gutter credit.

20. Upon information and belief, 10XBeta intentionally and knowingly removed copyright management information identifying Plaintiff as the photographer of the Photograph.

21. The conduct of 10XBeta violates 17 U.S.C. § 1202(b).

22. Upon information and belief, 10XBeta's falsification, removal and/or alteration of the aforementioned copyright management information was made without the knowledge or consent of Plaintiff.

23. Upon information and belief, the falsification, alteration and/or removal of said copyright management information was made by 10XBeta intentionally, knowingly and with the intent to induce, enable, facilitate, or conceal their infringement of Plaintiff's copyright in the Photograph. 10XBeta also knew, or should have known, that such falsification, alteration and/or removal of said copyright management information would induce, enable, facilitate, or conceal their infringement of Plaintiff's copyright in the Photograph.

24. As a result of the wrongful conduct of 10XBeta as alleged herein, Plaintiff is entitled to recover from 10XBeta the damages, that he sustained and will sustain, and any gains, profits and advantages obtained by 10XBeta because of their violations of 17 U.S.C. § 1202, including attorney's fees and costs.

25. Alternatively, Plaintiff may elect to recover from 10XBeta statutory damages pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 1203(c) (3) in a sum of at least \$2,500 up to \$25,000 for each violation of 17 U.S.C. § 1202.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests judgment as follows:

1. That Defendant 10XBeta be adjudged to have infringed upon Plaintiff's copyrights in the Photograph in violation of 17 U.S.C §§ 106 and 501;
2. The Defendant 10XBeta be adjudged to have falsified, removed and/or altered copyright management information in violation of 17 U.S.C. § 1202.
3. That Plaintiff be awarded Plaintiff's actual damages and Defendant's profits, gains or advantages of any kind attributable to Defendant's infringement of Plaintiff's Photograph;
4. That, with regard to the Second Claim for Relief, Plaintiff be awarded either:
 - a) Plaintiff's actual damages and Defendant's profits, gains or advantages of any kind attributable to Defendant's falsification, removal and/or alteration of copyright management information; or b) alternatively, statutory damages of at least \$2,500 and up to \$ 25,000 for each instance of false copyright management information and/or removal or alteration of copyright management information committed by Defendant pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 1203(c);

5. That Defendant be required to account for all profits, income, receipts, or other benefits derived by Defendant as a result of its unlawful conduct;
6. That Plaintiff be awarded his costs, expenses and attorneys' fees pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 1203(b);
7. That Plaintiff be awarded punitive damages for copyright infringement;
8. That Plaintiff be awarded attorney's fees and costs;
9. That Plaintiff be awarded pre-judgment interest; and
10. Such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and proper.

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Plaintiff hereby demands a trial by jury on all issues so triable in accordance with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 38(b).

Dated: Valley Stream, New York
June 24, 2020

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